

**Testimony before the Appropriations Committee**  
**February 15, 2013**

Hi, my name is David Woodworth. Good evening, and thank you Senator Harp, Representative Walker, and members of this committee for hearing my testimony today.

I am opposed to the Governor's proposal to eliminate funding for twenty-two new or expanded School Based Health Centers. Connecticut must continue to fund the expansion of school-based mental health programs, including School-Based Health Centers. "A stitch in time saves nine." This is my most memorable take-away from my first counseling sessions with Tom Narducci at Charlotte Hungerford Hospital's Center for Youth and Families, where I was treated for depression when I was 17. I consider myself lucky and blessed, despite the fact that I went through some rather troubling times emotionally during my high school years. I had family and school staff that although may not have been completely aware of the state of my mental health, were at least aware enough of my difficulties to direct me to proper care.

We have an opportunity to reach kids before their mental health difficulties become full-blown crises. Having access to proper care during my younger years made a big difference in my recovery today, but, if I actually had a more comprehensive health center in my school, it's very likely my recovery would have been within reach for me much sooner. I had crises later in life that were both emotionally debilitating, and financially draining, not only for me, but for my family, and for the state, as I was on Medicaid insurance.

Not only are these health centers an opportunity to help our children directly, they're also a perfect way to educate school staff, faculty, and parents about mental health issues that are completely unknown to some people. By offering an accessible, inexpensive resource in a place that is able to reach a good part of the public, more community awareness of signs and symptoms of mental health issues will lead to better understanding as a whole for a population plagued by stigma.

We have a responsibility to address the needs of our state. I was one of the four children statistically that will develop an emotional-behavioral disorder, and among only about 20% of that 1 in 4 that received the help I needed. In order for every school to offer a positive climate for learning and social development, Connecticut must continue to fund the expansion of school-based mental health programs, including School-Based Health Centers. As my first counselor taught me, "a stitch in time saves nine." Identifying and addressing mental health issues early will prevent longer term and more expensive needs later. Thank you.